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Ames Iowa Tribune

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David Belin, co-owner of Tribune, dies at 70

By THE TRIBUNE

David W. Belin, an Iowan who passed up a career as a concert violinist to become a lawyer and who then went on to become the nation's leading authority on the death of John F. Kennedy, died Sunday at St. Mary's Hospital of the Mayo Clinic in Rochester, Minn.

Mr. Belin was 70 years old. He had been in a coma with severe head injuries since falling in his hotel room 12 days ago while in Rochester for his annual physical examination at the Mayo Clinic.



Belin

*nation's leading
authority on the
Kennedy assassination*

Mr. Belin, along with publisher Gary Gerlach and Editor Michael Gartner, also was one of the partners of Partnership Press, Inc., owner of The Tribune and several other publications in the

Midwest.

David Belin was born in

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Washington, D.C., in 1928 and was raised in Sioux City. After graduating as valedictorian of his high school class, he turned down a fellowship at the Julliard School of Music and enlisted in the United States Army, where he served in Korea and Japan. He then enrolled in the University of Michigan, where he earned a bachelor's degree, a master's degree in business administration and a law degree.

He moved to Des Moines in 1954 and began practicing law. At the time of his death, he was the senior partner of Belin Lamson McCormick Zumbach Flynn.

In 1964, Chief Justice Earl Warren named Mr. Belin as counsel to the President's Commission on the Assassination of President Kennedy, known as the Warren Commission. As counsel, it fell to Mr. Belin to determine who killed the President. Based on his in-depth review of physical evidence and eyewitness testimony, the commission concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted as a lone gunman, and Mr. Belin later wrote two books about the assassination.

In 1975, President Gerald Ford named Mr. Belin the executive director of the Commission on CIA Activities Within the United States, known as the Rockefeller Commission. From 1984 to 1990, he served on the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities.

Mr. Belin was active in many aspects of the law, and he was considered an authority on estate law. He had written a popular book, "Leaving Money Wisely," and was at work on a second book on the subject at the time of his death.

In addition to his lifelong interest in music and music organizations, Mr. Belin was particularly active in Jewish causes, in the fields of education and the arts, and in corporate affairs. He was considered the nation's foremost lay leader in Jewish outreach to interdating and intermarried couples and their children. He founded the Jewish Outreach Institute in 1987 and earlier was the chairman



ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE PHOTOGRAPH

David Belin, pictured here in 1996, served as a top investigator on the Warren Commission.

INSIDE: AN EDITORIAL ABOUT MR. BELIN APPEARS IN TODAY'S TRIBUNE

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of the outreach commission of the Union of American Hebrew Congregations.

In education, he founded the Connie Belin and Jacqueline N. Blank International Center for Gifted Education and Talent Development at the University of Iowa. He was a member of the board of Phi Beta Kappa Associates, a member of the Advisory Board of the National Association for Gifted Children, and a special adviser to the University of Michigan on the management of its endowment funds. He was a national advocate for directing public resources to education of the gifted.

In business, he was a trustee of the 20 Kemper mutual funds and was on the boards of several smaller companies. As a founder and owner of Partnership Press, he was active in its growth and financial affairs.

Mr. Belin married Connie

Newman in 1952, and they had five children. Mrs. Belin, a member of the Iowa Board of Regents, died in 1980. In 1992, Mr. Belin married Barbara Ross of New York, and since then he had divided his time between Iowa and New York, where he was a financial adviser to families and corporations.

He is survived by his wife, by sons Jonathan of Pembroke Pines, Fla., James of Phoenix, Ariz., and Thomas of Santa Monica, Calif., and daughters Joy of Chevy Chase, Md., and Laura of London, England. He also is survived by a granddaughter, Janet Coleman-Belin; two stepchildren, Lee Ross of Sydney, Australia, and Jenifer Ross Schumacher of Tarrytown, N.Y.; and his brother, Daniel Belin of Los Angeles.

Services for Mr. Belin will be Wednesday morning at Temple B'Nai Jeshurun at 5101 Grand Ave. in Des Moines. Dunn's Funeral Home is handling the arrangements. The family requests that any memorial contributions be made to the Belin-Blank Center at the University of Iowa or the Jewish Outreach Institute in New York.

EDITORIAL

DAVID BELIN WAS A KIND MAN AND A GOOD FRIEND

This newspaper has been owned principally by three men – publisher Gary Gerlach, editor Michael Gartner, and Des Moines lawyer David Belin.

Belin would be considered the silent partner, except anyone who ever knew him knows that he was never silent about anything. David Belin had views on – and knowledge about – everything. He was a great violinist, a brilliant lawyer, a selfless public servant, a savvy corporate strategist, a generous philanthropist and a persuasive author.

He was also a kind man.

And it's that kindness that his two partners – and his wife and his five children – will miss most of all.

David Belin died Sunday after lying helpless in a coma for 12 days following a fall in a hotel room in Rochester, Minn. Ironically, he was in Rochester for his annual physical examination at the Mayo Clinic.

He led a remarkable life, part of which is outlined in his obituary in today's Tribune.

What the obituary doesn't say is this: He was a pacer. He never sat still. In his office, in a meeting, on an airplane, he was always popping up to get this, to show you that, to try out this idea, to probe that idea. And he was always writing – memos, articles, books, screenplays, notes. Until he fell in that hotel room, his brain never stopped working overtime.

What the obituary also doesn't say is this: He cared about his friends. The phone calls were constant – from here, from there, from everywhere – and the first questions were always about your health, your wife, your children. Often, that was the only reason for the call, but always that was the first issue to dispense with.

And what the obituary doesn't say is this: He had a wonderful sense of humor. He loved puns and corny jokes, and he was great with the needle. But he could take as well as he gave – always with an explosive laugh – and he'd tell a joke on himself just as readily as tell one on you. He loved to laugh, and he laughed the way he did everything else – with gusto.

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He was passionate in his beliefs. He was a moderate Republican who had no use for the far right of his party or the far left of the Democratic Party. Later in life, he became so sure that a woman must have a right to choose whether to have an abortion that he became almost a one-issue voter. He thought education was the answer to virtually every problem, and to prove it he established a center at the University of Iowa to develop ways to educate gifted children. And he was sure – more sure than he was of anything else – that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone when he killed John F. Kennedy on that awful day in Dallas in 1963.

Belin came to know more about that assassination than did anyone else in the world. As counsel to the Warren Commission, he was charged with determining who killed the president. Later, as executive director of the Rockefeller Commission looking into CIA activities in the United States, he gathered still more knowledge about the assassination. He wrote two books about it, he would argue the minutest detail with anyone who challenged him, and he would excoriate Oliver Stone and others who preached of conspiracies. That issue could make his blood boil.

Indeed, as Belin lay in a coma last week, one of his friends wanted to probe how truly sick the lawyer was. The friend held Belin's hand, looked gently into his face as he lay there hooked up to machines and monitors, and said, "Let's talk politics, and this time I'd welcome it if you'd interrupt me." When there was no response, the friend said, "David, I think there was a conspiracy to kill John F. Kennedy." When there was no response even to that, the friend was despondent.

David Belin left his mark on this nation, this state and this newspaper.

His death, at age 70, is a tragedy for all.

*Ames
Iowa*



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THE TRIBUNE

MID-IOWA'S PULITZER PRIZE-WINNING
DAILY NEWSPAPER

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